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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Urges Shoppers to Make Sure Prices Are Accurate

(Phoenix, Ariz. - Nov. 23, 2005) As the holiday shopping season moves into high gear, Attorney General Terry Goddard today encouraged consumers to check the prices they pay at checkout counters in light of studies that have shown retailers often ring up wrong numbers.

Federal law requires retailers to maintain a 98 percent price scanning accuracy rate, which amounts to one error in every 50 items purchased. But many stores far exceed that error rate, according to annual studies by Arizona's Department of Weights and Measures.

In last year's study, some retailers failed to meet that standard in more than half of their inspections. The errors included both undercharges and overcharges. A new report from Weights and Measures is due to be released Friday, Nov. 25.

"Unfortunately, shoppers must pay attention when checking out. You cannot assume that what you are charged is the posted or advertised price," Goddard said. "Fair pricing demands accuracy, and too many retailers give consumers reason to be concerned."

Goddard noted that two other studies this year found high rates of pricing errors at stores operated by Wal-Mart, the nation's largest retailer, in California, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. The studies, done at the University of Illinois and the University of California-Berkeley, showed that Wal-Mart stores in those states scanned the wrong price as often as 8.3 percent of the time. In California, 87 percent of Wal-Marts surveyed exceeded the 2 percent error standard.

Shoppers should keep these pricing tips in mind:

- Watch the cash register display to be sure the scanned price matches the posted price.
- Check your receipt before leaving the store.
- Bring ads with you to the stores.
- Ask for a refund if you have been overcharged.
- Ask to see the store's pricing error policy, which retailers are required to have in writing.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, please contact the Arizona Attorney General's Office at 602.542.5763 in Phoenix; 520.628.6504 in Tucson; or 1.800.352.8431 outside the metro areas. You can also file an online complaint by visiting www.azag.gov. If you would like to file a complaint in person, the Attorney General's Office has 16 satellite offices throughout the state with volunteers available to help. Locations and hours of operation are posted on the Attorney General's Web site.

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